



PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appl. No.: 09/991,883
Applicant(s): Glenn Bingham, et al.
Filed: November 26, 2001
Art Unit: 3629
Examiner: Traci L. Smith
Title: MEETING SITE SELECTION BASED
ON ALL-INCLUSIVE MEETING COST

Confirmation No.: 4179

Docket No.: 047138/258832
Customer No.: 00826

November 8, 2005

Mail Stop AF
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

PRE-APPEAL REQUEST FOR REVIEW

Sir:

Applicant in the above-identified patent application hereby requests review of the Official Action dated June 16, 2005, rejecting Claims 21-38 of the above-identified application. This request is being filed concurrent with a Notice of Appeal, and no amendments are being filed herewith.

Remarks/Arguments in support of this request begin on page 2 and end on page 5 of this paper, and accordingly include no more than the five (5) pages of remarks permitted to be provided.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This communication is filed in response to the final Official Action of June 16, 2005. The final Official Action rejects Claims 21-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by a Business Travel News article entitled "Megs at a Crossroads" ("Megs"). In addition, the final Official Action rejects Claims 27-38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Megs in view of articles relating to Eventsource (retrieved from the wayback machine on June 7, 2005 for any linkage of January 31, 1998). As explained below, however, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention includes statutory subject matter and is patentably distinct from Megs and request reconsideration and reversal of all of the aforementioned rejections.

Megs states, in the context of prospective business plans for American Express, that "the agency has developed a PC-based product that optimizes site selection by looking at attendees' points of origin, the land arrangements and the meal costs, and then producing a list of options for meeting sites ranked by cost" (Megs, page 2). In addition, in an unrelated portion of the article regarding the combination of travel bookings with expense reporting, Megs discloses that "[o]ur vision is to allow people to get information and make reservations through e-mail, and on the back end to combine billing information and travel data and feed it back to the traveler on the same email, allowing him to create an electronic expense report" (Megs, page 2).

In the Response to Arguments, the Examiner submits that Megs discloses sending the all-inclusive cost of travel in a ranked order because Megs discloses combining billing and travel data into one email. In addition, the Examiner finds that "points of origin" could be considered a preference or a geographic location, with respect to independent Claims 21-26. The Examiner further finds that defining minimum requirements recited in Claims 23, 25, and 26 could be inputting the attendees' points of origin as a minimum requirement.

Independent Claims 21, 22, and 24 provide a method, computer-readable medium, and computer system, respectively, of selecting a facility for hosting a meeting. Claims 21, 22, and 24 recite receiving a range of dates, a list of potential attendees, and an originating location for each attendee, and calculating an all-inclusive cost, which includes at least costs associated with travel and lodging. Claims 21, 22, and 24 also recite ranking the plurality of potential meeting

facilities based at least in part on the calculated all-inclusive cost for each of the meeting facilities, wherein the meeting facilities are selected from a set of meeting facilities based on a preference and/or a geographic location.

Independent Claims 23, 25, and 26 provide a method, computer system, and computer-readable medium, respectively, for evaluating a plurality of potential meeting facilities. Claims 23, 25, and 26 include similar recitations as those of Claims 21, 22, and 24, namely, defining minimum requirements for a select meeting facility, transmitting the minimum requirements to an application server, and receiving a ranked list of meeting facilities, wherein each facility is ranked based on an all-inclusive cost calculation corresponding to an estimated cost of holding the meeting at the meeting facility. The all-inclusive cost includes at least costs associated with travel and lodging, and the meeting facilities included in the ranked list are selected from a set of meeting facilities based on a preference and/or a geographic location.

In contrast, Megas does not teach or suggest calculating an all-inclusive cost including at least costs associated with travel and lodging for hosting a meeting at each of a plurality of potential meeting facilities, as recited by independent Claims 21, 22, and 24. Moreover, Megas does not teach or suggest receiving a ranked list of meeting facilities, wherein each facility is ranked based on an all-inclusive cost-calculation that corresponds to an estimated total cost of holding a meeting at a meeting facility and that includes at least costs associated with travel and lodging, as recited by independent Claims 23, 25, and 26. Megas discloses using meal costs, as well as attendees' points of origin and land arrangements to rank meeting sites. However, Megas nowhere teaches or suggests using an all-inclusive cost that includes, at a minimum, lodging and transportation costs to rank each meeting site. At most, Megas teaches using meal costs, which is unlike the claimed invention that calculates an all-inclusive cost corresponding to an estimated total cost of holding the meeting at the meeting facility.

Although Megas discloses using attendees' points of origin, Megas does not specify that travel costs associated with the attendees' points of origin are taken into consideration as opposed to merely determining the relative convenience or inconvenience of travel from the various points of origin. Furthermore, Megas discloses that land arrangements are considered

when ranking the meeting sites, but again, Megas does not teach or suggest if and how the land arrangements are taken into consideration with respect to cost.

The portion of Megas relied upon by the Examiner that discloses the combination of booking travel reservations with expense reporting is unrelated to the meeting planning portion of Megas. Megas simply discloses that American Express was developing a system that would allow users to book travel and receive billing information via email for expense reporting, which was unrelated to the system being developed for optimizing meeting site selection. Thus, the portion of Megas that discloses booking travel reservations is not considered in ranking the meeting sites by cost. Thus, Megas does not teach or suggest taking travel and lodging costs into account as recited by the claimed invention in conjunction with the all-inclusive cost calculation. Even if both portions of Megas were considered to be related, Megas does not teach or suggest calculating an all-inclusive cost that includes lodging costs, as Megas only discloses meal costs for ranking meeting sites by cost.

Furthermore, Megas does not teach or suggest that a plurality of meeting facilities are selected from a set of potential meeting facilities based on preference and/or geographic location, as recited by independent Claims 21-26. The Examiner finds that this particular recitation is disclosed by Megas because Megas discloses that attendees' points of origin are used in ranking a list of meeting sites. However, one advantage of the claimed invention is that meeting planners are able to see an all-inclusive cost prior to inputting preferences or geographic locations such that the meeting planners are better able to understand the relationship between price and preferences (i.e., amenities) and/or geographic location. As stated in the specification of the present application, "the planner is given the all-inclusive meeting cost information before making the decisions about non-required amenities and location, so that he or she has a broad enough selection of potential meeting facilities to find the best value by trading off amenities and location with cost." In this regard, the claims of the present application recite that meeting facilities are ranked based on at least an all-inclusive cost, and that those meeting facilities included in the ranked list are selected from a set of potential meeting facilities based on a preference and/or geographic location. Conversely, Megas simply considers points of origin, land arrangements, and meals costs that are used to generate a ranked list of meeting sites. Thus,

Appl. No.: 09/991,883

Amdt. dated 11/8/05

Reply to Office action of June 16, 2005

Megas does not teach or suggest that the ranked list of meeting sites have been further selected from a set of meeting sites based on a meeting planner's preferences or desired geographic location.

Therefore Megas does not teach or suggest either calculating an all-inclusive cost that includes at least costs associated with travel and lodging, or ranking meeting facilities based on an all-inclusive cost-calculation that includes at least costs associated with travel and lodging. In addition, Megas does not teach or suggest that a plurality of meeting facilities are selected from a set of potential meeting facilities based on preference and/or geographic location. As such, the rejection of independent Claims 21-26 and those claims that depend therefrom under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is overcome.

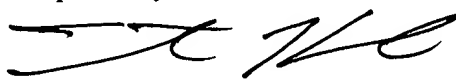
Appl. No.: 09/991,883
Amdt. dated 11/8/05
Reply to Office action of June 16, 2005

CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be reversed and that a Notice of Allowance be issued.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

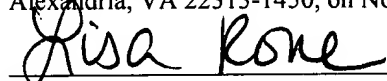


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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on November 8, 2005



Lisa Rone